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Regional council to develop plan for green infrastructure

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SALT LAKE CITY -- The Wasatch Front Regional Council wants Top of Utah communities to think green when it comes to development.

But at what costs, was the immediate concern of Davis and Weber County commissioners.

At a WFRC meeting Thursday in Salt Lake City, state officials authorized the council to contract with a local nonprofit organization to develop a plan for green infrastructure in the Top of Utah.

WFRC will work with the Center for Greenspace Design to complete two phases of a regional plan promoting environmentally friendly construction as communities plan for their future.

Green infrastructure is a network of connected open space and natural areas like wetlands, forest preserves, farmland, parks and ecological, scenic or recreational areas.

LaNiece Davenport, of the WFRC, said a green infrastructure plan will help connect communities to their landscapes and help them identify which land to preserve and conserve, where to construct roads and utilities and where to permit development.

Over the past year, WFRC staff has met with various entities to identify funding sources for the plan. The entire project is expected to take 18 months to complete and will cost about \$175,000.

WFRC has already acquired \$81,000 for the plan from Utah Forestry and Fire and State Lands, the U.S. Forest Service, the Utah Quality Growth Commission, the Utah Department of Transportation and the Utah Transit Authority.

"It's been a little bit of a bumpy road trying to secure funding," Davenport said. "We're trying to secure additional funding over the next 12 months."

Davenport said the WFRC would like cities to contribute as well.

At the council meeting, Weber County Commissioner Jan Zogmaister voiced concerns about how much counties and cities could contribute.

"We may not have additional funding to contribute to this with the things we've already been doing," Zogmaister said.

Davis County Commissioner Louenda Downs had concerns with the plan interfering with what municipalities already have planned.

"If you are going to come in and compliment what we've already been doing, that's great," Downs said. "But if you're talking about changing things, you might run into a lot of resistance."

Davenport said the intent of the plan is to complement communities' existing plans.